

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday 15 February 1978 CG NIDC 78/038C

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, 15 February 1978,

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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ETHIOPIA-US: Mengistu's Comments

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[REDACTED] In a press conference yesterday, Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu leveled another strong blast at US policy in the Horn of Africa. Mengistu accused the US of indirectly arming Somalia by replenishing the arsenals of Muslim countries that have supplied arms to Mogadiscio.

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[REDACTED] Mengistu threatened to break relations with the US, Britain, and West Germany if they continued their alleged support for Somalia. He also accused the US of working with other countries to try to topple his government.

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[REDACTED] The Ethiopian leader seemed to be signaling the US that its policies regarding the Horn would have to be changed if there was to be any improvement in US-Ethiopian relations. Mengistu is still somewhat of a novice in dealing with foreign relations and may not fully realize that his remarks by most standards overstep the bounds of what might be considered a reasonable warning. Even so, his remarks are not simply rhetoric. Mengistu distrusts US intentions toward his government and feels that most of his criticism of the US is warranted.

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LEBANON: Trying to Restore Stability

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//The Lebanese parliament yesterday enacted a law designed to appease Syrian demands for an investigation of the causes of last week's fighting without further alarming Christian leaders. The situation remains tense, however, and further fighting may occur.//

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//The parliament created an investigative committee and a security court, composed of Syrian and Lebanese officers, to look into and try crimes by and against the Syrian-dominated Arab peacekeeping forces. The measure, which passed with only one dissenting vote, may have been approved with a tacit understanding that it would not be retroactively applied to Christian militiamen involved in the clashes with Syrian regulars last week. The new security court will, however, be empowered to try regular Lebanese Army personnel--a key Syrian demand--and members of the peacekeeping forces accused of crimes during the fighting.//

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A leader of the Christian National Liberal Party told a US Embassy officer that he was pleased with the law and would support the security court's decisions. Other Christian leaders, however, are less enthusiastic. The chief of the Phalanges Party's militia told an Embassy official that the law was merely another example of increasing Syrian control.

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//Syrian President Asad apparently wants to contain the confrontation with the Christians as quickly as possible. Syria has already dropped its original demand that the Christian commander of the Lebanese Army unit involved in the initial incident on 7 February be summarily turned over to the Syrian forces. The Syrians have also compromised by agreeing to allow the security court to try peacekeeping personnel.//

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25X1 [] Syria's government-controlled press has blamed the fighting on a "plot" aimed at diverting Syria from its opposition to Egypt's peace initiative. According to the US Embassy in Damascus, senior Syrian officials believe the fighting was the result of a conspiracy; some blame the US, while others say Egypt or Israel was behind the violence. Syrian intelligence apparently is blaming extremist Christians backed by Israel.

25X1 [] //Asad has probably already been advised by some of his lieutenants to take a hard line against the Christians in order to restore Syrian authority. He knows however, that any Syrian attempt to disband the new Lebanese Army or disarm the Christian militias would spark new clashes.//

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25X1 [] //According to press reports, the Syrians have encircled Fayyidiyah and Christian-controlled east Beirut with additional troops and heavy weapons. Even if a major confrontation is avoided, small-scale violence will continue to undermine the cease-fire.//

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CHAD: Ceasefire Efforts

25X1 [] Chad's appeal for a cease-fire has so far had no effect on the Libyan-backed Muslim rebels besieging government forces in the north. The Chadian Foreign Minister arrives in New York today for talks on the possibility of a UN Security Council debate on the conflict. Chadian officials intend to proceed with their case against Libya in the Security Council unless the rebels agree to a cease-fire by tomorrow.

25X1 [] The Chadian Government, apparently distressed over its inability to obtain additional military assistance from sources other than the French, broadcast an appeal by President Malloum on Sunday for an end to hostilities. The appeal followed

a meeting of Chad's Supreme Military Council, which apparently concluded that a cease-fire may be the government's only alternative to defeat. The insurgents control large portions of Chadian territory and are on the verge of seizing several government outposts.

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25X1 [redacted] //Malloum's call for a cease-fire appears to have been the result of Sudanese efforts to bring Chad and Libya to the negotiating table. Sudanese President Numayri himself feels threatened by Libya and probably believes that the maintenance of Chadian unity and territorial integrity is essential to his country's security.// [redacted]

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AUSTRALIA: Commonwealth Summit

25X1 [redacted] //Australian Prime Minister Fraser hopes that the conference of 12 Asian and Pacific Commonwealth heads of government now under way near Sydney will put Australia in the forefront of Asian and Pacific Commonwealth activity.//

25X1 [redacted] //The idea for the four-day conference, which concludes tomorrow, arose when Asian and Pacific Commonwealth leaders were in London last June for the Queen's jubilee celebrations. The participants in the conference--the first such regional Commonwealth gathering--are seeking to underscore their interest in continued close ties in the face of what they see as Britain's neglect of the Commonwealth in favor of closer association with Western Europe. They also hope to come up with a regional consensus on problems of common concern so that they can present their views more effectively at the next full-scale Commonwealth summit.//

25X1 [] //Despite this interest, the enormous diversity among the participating nations--they range in size from India to the island state of Nauru in the South Pacific--will limit discussions to general topics. The reluctance with which New Zealand participated, moreover, reflects the group's lack of cohesiveness. Prime Minister Muldoon attended the meeting for only two days, which the Australians took as a deliberate affront to Fraser. Relations between the two Commonwealth neighbors are somewhat distant, a reflection of New Zealand's resentment over what it sees as a condescending Australian attitude. 25X1 []

BRIEF

USSR-Vietnam

25X1 [] Leningrad party boss Romanov is currently in Vietnam. This is the first visit there by a Politburo member since then-President Podgornyy traveled to Hanoi in 1972. Romanov's visit is a further indication of Soviet support for Vietnam in its border dispute with Cambodia. The USSR has intensified its public criticism of Cambodia in recent weeks and has repeatedly echoed the Vietnamese line on the dispute. 25X1 []

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